

SOME
THOUGHTS

On the present
State of Affairs.

Humbly offered to the
High Court of Parliament

BY

A Lover of his Queen and Countrey.

ſ^r Archb^d ſimilar et c^o bonu

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Some Thoughts on the present State of Affairs, &c.

IN a Storm, it is not only permitted, but required, that every Passenger in the Ship (who runs an equal Risque of drowning with the Mariners) should put to his helping hand, to keep her off Shelves and Rocks, and bring her to a safe Harbour.

Tho' the Representatives of a Nation are indeed more immediatly concerned, and have more frequent opportunities than others, to interpose their United Courage and Wisdom for Rectifying the Disorders of a State; yet Private Men may be allowed to give their thoughts on such matters; and it is the duty, of every Member of the Society to exert themselves in their several Capacities with the outmost vigor for the common welfare.

The warm Debates in the House, the Thundering Declamations from the Pulpits, and the sweating labours of the Press are evident Symptoms that our Body-Politick labours under some dangerous Distemper, which, seems to have been of long contracting, and to have almost corrupted the whole Mass of Blood, so that Death must certainly ensue, unless some healing Methods be fallen on to allay the ferment of these bad Humors which has so much impaired our Health, and weaken'd our sound Constitution.

It would consume too much time to enumerate the many Grievances this poor Nation has been struggling with these several Years, but seeing the Source of all our Misery, may be said to take date from our being united under one Sovereign with a Nation more Wealthy and Powerful than our selves: Before I proceed further, I shall briefly give some Reasons to shew, that since that time, all our Affairs have been in a declining state, and gone backwards.

By taking our Kings from Us, we are deprived of all the benefits which we would undoubtedly reap by enjoying his presence: Where Courts are, Money Circulates, and all Ranks of People are certainly gainers, so far is there a *Lucrum Cessans*, but the *damnum emergens* is much greater, for ever since our Kings resided in *England*, vast Sums of Money have gone yearly out of the Kingdom, which has more impoverished it, than all our losses in the ballance of Trade with the rest of *Europe*.

A great part of our Nobility and Gentry give constant attendance at *London*, by which their Fortunes are not only wasted and lavished, but being taken, and accustomed with the *English* Plenty, and their soft and luxurious way of living, when they come home, they cannot Inure themselves



Selves to the Vigor, Vertue and Frugality of their famous Ancestors, but consume most of their time in Sloth, and Ease, and either contemns, or are careless, and indifferent of the true concerns of their Native Countrey.

But what is yet worse, by being for so long a time deprived of the presence of our Sovereigns, we have no opportunity to represent our just Grievances, nor can they be informed of the true interest of *Scotland*, but by their Secretaries; who if they be not Men of Honour, Courage and Integrity, have too frequent temptations to grow rich with the spoils of their Countrey, and raise their greatness on its Ruines, but GOD forbid any of them should ever stoop so low to Act as Journey-men to the *English* Courtiers;

So long as *Scots* Affairs run in this Channel, Parliaments will do us little good, we are the lesser Kingdom, and our interest must give way to that of our Richer Neighbours, which many times forces our States Men (I am obliged in Charity to believe, contrary to their Inclinations) to be determined by the Advices and influences of their Ministers, who concert with them what is to be undertaken in the *Scots* Parliament, the accomplishing whereof will fix their interest at Court, and the performance is very easie, our Managers having the sole Distribution of Pensions and Places, by which they draw the Majority to their side.

I speak not this with a design to Reflect on any of our Ministers now at the Helm (for whom I have a great deal of respect) I only regret our Misfortune, to be subject to the dangerous influences and Counsels of a People whose interest and inclinations are so different from ours.

Things and not Persons are to be found fault with, and if any thing has been hitherto done amiss, let it be forgot and Rectified for the future: far be it from me to rip up old sores, or expose our late wounds to a fresh bleeding, I wish with all my heart past miscarriages may be buried in Oblivions, and that all *Scots* Men may heartily join to promote the welfare of their Country: But I must be pardoned to say, that so long as our Secretaries (who are subject to Infirmities as well as other Men) depend so much on an *English* Ministry, and so long as they have so powerful an influence on our Parliaments, we can never reap these Advantages from their Meeting, that were design'd by their first institution. For give me leave to say,

Tho Parliaments are an essential part of our Constitution, the Guardians of the Peoples Liberties, and the best fence against Arbitrary Power, yet, as the best things may be depraved, so may Parliaments degenerate from their first Original; and if the Peoples Representatives can be Debauched in their Principles, and be brought to Act as the Ministry directs them

them, they lose their Genuine vertue and lustre, our goodly Constitution degenerats into a Monstrous sort of Tyranny, and Liberty and Property remain but empty sounds; it's therefore of the greatest importance to keep our Legislative power untainted

To give Parliaments their full Force, and make them truly useful, and capable to answer the Nation's Wants and Exigencies, great Care must be taken, that they be rightly constitute, that there be neither a Flaw in the Elections, nor in the due Qualifications of the Members.

It has been much complained, of late, that our Peers too officiously meddle in the Elections of the other Two States, which is a great Encroachment: Some are of Opinion, that our Peers are too numerous already, and that we should have Two Houses, if there be Reason for this, there is much more, that they should not be allowed to concern themselves in the Elections of these, who can only ballance their greater power.

As to the Qualifications necessary to the Representatives, their Constituents are most competent Judges; but if we would have them warmly and impartially to espouse the true Interest of their Countrey: All who have Pensions, Commissions in the Army, Customs, or Excise, should be excluded, as unfit for such a Trust.

This needs not be thought such a strange Proposal, it has for some Years past been put in practice in *England*; that wise Nation is sensible of the good Effects of it, and found this Step necessary for preventing the committing any Rape on their Liberties, by these in whose Hands they are entrusted and depositat: And we have no less Reason to look to our Security.

It is our Misfortune, that our Parliaments meet so seldom, and that their Sessions are so short: The First of these Evils may be obviate by such an Act as the Triennial Law in *England*, it cost indeed a vast Sum of Money, but that People never reckons a Purchase too dear, that enlarges the Privilege of the Subject. It may perhaps be too expensive for our Parliament to meet every Year, but it will not be improper to renew the ancient Custom of electing the Representatives of Shires and Burghs every *Michaelmas*, this would be an effectual Means to prevent corrupting of Members, the most dangerous way of subverting Liberty.

When our Parliaments do meet, they seldom sit above a Month or six Weeks; for when the King or Queen's Business (as they call it) is over, the Breath of an Adjournment blows them Home again, without doing any thing for the Service of their Countrey, or the Satisfaction of their Constituents.

The only Reason given to justify this Procedure is, that Parliaments are both expensive to the Crown, and the Countrey. In Answer to which, I beg leave to say, so soon as the Countrey can be made sensible, that they are to be Gainers by Parliaments, they will not grudge some extraordinary Charges, and I know few that care to give Money for nothing: As to the Expenses of the Crown, I acknowledge they cannot be altogether avoided, but ways and means may be fallen on to restrict them, and cut off such as are superfluous.

It would tend to the Dignity, as well as Interest of our Monarchs, that the Royal Apartments were once compleatly furnished, and kept in good Order, for Accommodation of the High Commissioners in time coming, which may be done for a less Sum than has been bestowed on their extraordinary Equipage these Seven or Eight Years past.

I am also of Opinion, that the Allowance for their Table is extravagant, and that the one half may suffice; for I would gladly know, what necessity there is for Fourty Members of Parliament to Dine every day with the Commissioner? A Sumptuous Entertainment may well satiate the Appetite, but can never bribe or proselite the Reason of any, who have not the Sensual Inclinations of Brutes.

This Practice was introduced in *Middleton's* Parliament just after the Restoration, and tho the Nation, upon so happy a Change, might be allowed a little Extravagance, yet we have had sufficient Cause of Mortification since, by our many sad Calamities at Home, and Melancholly Disappointments Abroad.

If thus, by good OEconomy, the Expenses of our Parliament might be lowed the one half, and nothing lop't off, but the extravagant part, which is rather a Trouble than Advantage both to the High Commissioner and the Honourable Members, they would have more time to dispatch Business.

If the Legislative Power be once rightly constitute, there is the less danger from the Ministerial, for Streams are seldom muddy, where the Fountain is clear.

The next thing I offer to the Consideration of the High Court of Parliament is, to make a narrow Enquiry how the Publick Fonds have been managed since the Revolution; there has been loud Complaints, that much of that Money has been embazled, and converted into wrong Uses: It will therefore be fit to enquire, what ground there is for such Complaints, that Justice may be done to the Nation, which being Poor, had need to be very Frugal: Nor can there be a greater Encouragement for granting New Supplies, than to be made sensible, that former Aids have been applied for the Uses they were given.

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Besides Cess and Excise, we had Hearth-Money, and two several Poles. These extraordinary Taxations fell heavy on the meaner Sort of People they were imposed for paying the Debts and Arrears due to the Countrey and Army; but it is confidently suggested, that others have reaped the greatest Advantage: And seeing these Debts may some time or other be charged on the Countrey, why should not the *Huy* and *Cry* be raised after such, as are suspected to have robb'd the Publick, that they may be brought to a fair Tryal.

Now that I am on the Publick Fonds, I must speak a little of the Excise, which is no inconsiderable Branch thereof, and has more than once fallen very far short of the *Quota* it was Farmed for.

I am told by Persons skilled in such Matters, that the Alteration of the Duty on Malt, and putting it upon the Liquor, was an Advantage to the Tacksmen: If this holds true, the great Dearth is the only ground for pleading Rebatelements.

We had indeed a very great and long Dearth of that Grain, and it must be owned, that these who Farmed the Excise immediately before it happened, are very well founded to crave Deductions, because the Dearth was *Casus Superveniens* as to them, but their Successors have no such Pretext; for much about the time of their engaging, Malt and Barley gave the highest Rates, so that they had, or at least might have had under their View, what this Branch was able to yield at that time, and ought to have made Offer accordingly, and not to have gone at a Venture, in hopes to get an Ease by the Favour and Mediation of some Statesman: And the Managers of our Revenue, who had so often Experience of the many Pretexts made use of, for Deductions to the Farmers of the Publick Fonds, should have taken care to fix the last Tacksmen better, by inserting such plain Clauses in their Contract, as would have made the Terms thereof clear, and left no place for Cavilling.

It merits the Wisdom of the Parliament, to take some effectual Method to discourage Pragmatick Medlers with the Publick Fonds; and that their Product may be rendred more certain for the future, it may perhaps be adviseable, to turn the Excise into a Collection: It was by this wise Method, that it was so much improv'd in our Neighbouring Nation some Years before the late Revolution; And the then Commissioners of Treasuary, knew so exactly what the Excise could yield, that if, at any time, they had enclined to Farm it, they could not possibly be imposed on.

Till Peace and settled Times has brought things to a more certain Consistency, it may not be improper to take a middle Course betwixt a Farm and a Collection: That is to say, that the Excise or Customs be set at a
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certain yearly Rent, below the true value: The Tacksmen may be agreed with for their Expenses in managing, then to give them some moderate Encouragement, by way of Poundage, out of the Profits they shall make over and above the Tack Duty, and the entire Overplus; (their Allowances deducted) to be accompted for to the Exchequer.

By this Means the Government will have a fixed Rent to depend on, and suppose private Industry should improve any Duty very much, the largest Share thereof will accrue to the Crown; and if either a New Fond can be put in a good Method and Order, by such an Undertaking, or if an old one, (which for some Years has been almost sinking) can be thus retrieved, the Revenue will be advanced, the People eased, and at expiring of the Tack, the Queen may either Farm it on, or manage it by Faithful Collectors of known Merit and Integrity, and who have other Qualifications to recommend them, than merely for their having the good Fortune to be Members of Parliament.

The Farming the Customs some years ago to the Royal Burrows, was a very dangerous Error, and a more compendious way to subvert our Constitution than all the *Quo Warranto's* brought against Incorporations by King Charles and King James the Second.

The foot they are on at present is something better, but I am afraid they will run to no great Accompt, because the Managers, Collectors, and most of the subordinate Officers are very little Versed in such matters, and have other Employments to divert them; whereas the business of the Customs does not only require Skill, but a close and assiduous application.

The *Habeas Corpus* Act was a very great Priviledge to the Subject, but it was obtained with so much struggle, and every inch of ground so warmly disputed, that it seemed rather extorted than granted; for which reason it may perhaps need a Review for rendering it of greater use and value, and making it more fully Answer all the designs for which it was framed.

The taking some effectual course with the poor, deserves also the Parliaments consideration; both our Religion and Interest requires it, for if fewer hands were suffered to remain idle, and if the poor had full Employment, it would very much tend to the common welfare, and contribute to the adding every Year to the general Stock of the Kingdom.

Amongst many other Methods, which has been proposed from time to time, I think it my Duty to put the Representatives of the Nation in mind, to look with a Compassionate Eye into the several Prisons of this Kingdom, where many Hundreds consume their time in Vice and Idleness, eating bread, and doing no work, whose labours might be profitable to the common wealth.

The suffering so many Miserable Creatures to Rot in Goals is rather a loss than benefite to the Creditors, it may therefore be worth the Parliaments Wisdom to think on some good Act, that may effectually put an end to this Mischief so Scandalous in a Countrey that proposes to thrive by Trade, and should set all hands to work.

The Act in favours of Poor Burgesses has done some good that way, but wants to be explained in some things, and is defective in others; so it will not be difficult to frame a more clear and extensive Act, which may relieve and release the poor Debtors; and yet preserve to the Creditors all their fair just and honest Rights and Interests.

There is a Commission for Bankrupts at *Amsterdam*, who, when a Man's Affairs run into Disorder, meet, and enquire into the cause of his breaking, if they find it was occasioned by Misfortunes, and casual Losses, they convene the Creditors, amongst whom they divide the Debtors effects in proportion to their respective Sums, and give a share thereof to the Debtor himself to begin the World again, and it very often happens, that his Industry being quicken'd and being made wiser by Experience, he doubles his Diligence, and in Process of time is not only in a condition to satisfy his just Debts, but also to leave a competent Stock to provide his Family; whereas in Prison such a Person had been lost to all intents and purposes, and rendered altogether incapable either to shift for himself, or do Justice to others, which is no small detriment to the Publick.

I hope I need say little to the point of the Succession, being perswaded the Parliament has no mind to meddle with that Affair: God Almighty may yet bless us with a Successor of the Queens Body, and so long as She is capable to bear Children, it would look like a piece of ill breeding to carve out one for her; The renowned Queen *Elizabeth* would by no means suffer this nice and tender point to be touched, but left it to God's disposal: And the event shewed, that he who governs the Universe, did more effectually provide for the happiness and Security of *Britain*, than Humane Wisdom & Policy could possibly have contrived it. The procedure of *England* in the business of the Succession is no Argument for us, they did not think it worth their while to advise with us in a matter, of so great importance; nor should we think their Example powerful enough to induce us to Write after their Copy: It is high time for us to look to our selves when we have been so much neglected by others: And seeing all wise and overruling Providence has put once more an opportunity in our hands to make our selves and Posterity happy, let us take care to improve it to the best advantage, and be very Cautious how we manage this After-game, and how we venture the last Stake.

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The Act given in the other day by the Marques of *Atbol* Lord Privy Seal, (if I be rightly informed) has some tendency this way, in providing for our Security upon the unhappy event of Her Majesty's dying without issue, and therefore I shall not presume to Anticipate what may be spoke in the House, upon this and some other good Acts presented and read the same day.

I was also very well pleased to hear, that a Petition from the Broken Officers was brought in, and is to be further considered: The neglecting them so long is a Scandal and Reproach to our Nation, in whose Quarrel they spent their Youth, Blood, Strength, and Fortunes. What a melancholly thought did it afford, to see Gentlemen, who had boldly encountered Death in its most terrible Shapes Abroad, in Hazard of Starving for want of Bread at Home? Let us then, for our Reputations sake, and in Justice and Compassion to these Gallant Mens Sufferings, fall on some effectual Method for subsisting them, till an Occasion offer to employ them in the Queen and Countreys Service.

The News of letting the Motion for the Supply fall, and yielding, that the General Resolve to secure our Religion, Liberties, and Trade, shall be considered by the Parliament, previous to all other things, will, I am perswaded, be very acceptable to all good Men, as almost every Body was surprized, that there was ever any Struggle or Competition betwixt these Two Overtures.

I am very sure our Gracious Queen, (who has no separate Interest from her People) will go alongst with every thing that can be proposed to make them happy ; besides the many Assurances which Her Majesty has given us of her good Intentions, Her calling us together, (before her own Affairs made the Parliaments meeting necessary,) is an evident Proof, that she designs thereby, to give them a fair and full Opportunity to represent their just Grievances, that what shall be found amiss, either in our Constitution, or what Abuses may have creep't into any part of the Administration, may be duly rectified.

When Her Majesty has shown so much Goodness and Condescendance, we should be wanting to our selves, and to our Posterity, if we did not lay hold on this happy and precious Occasion.

Our Great and Gracious Queen may put an entire Confidence in the Loyalty and Affection of Her Parliament, and tho the greatest part thought it an indispensibly Duty, in their present Circumstances, to loose no time to secure Religion, Liberties and Laws, (which comprehends all that's dear or valuable to Mankind,) yet Her Majesty will be convinced, that they will, with all due Respect and Deference, entertain any Proposal

that can be made for the Honour and Safety of Her Royal Person and Government, and that they will show themselves as Zealous and forward to grant, what Supplies shall be found necessary for the present Exigence, as these who pressed them a little too soon: But will not the People pay their Taxes with the greater Alacrity and Willingness, when they are satisfied, they are given for so good Purposes? Can the Security of our Religion and Property, both now and hereafter, be thought too dear a Purchase? This Method, I am perswaded, cannot be condemned by any, that will judge impartially, and is not engaged in a Party, and therefore it is not to be expected, that the Procedure of these Noble and Worthy Patriots, will be displeasing to their Royal Mistress, and sure I am, it ought strongly to recommend them to the Love and Esteem of all True Hearted Scots-men, seeing Scotland's Honour and Welfare is their chief Aim and Concern.

Time will not allow me to enlarge on this Subject, or to discourse fully on every thing that may seem proper for the present Occasion: These few Thoughts are but general Hints for abler Heads to improve and enlarge on.

Having done with the State, it may be expected, I shall say something of the present Contraversie betwixt our Church-men, having mentioned it in the beginning of this Discourse.

I must own, I am very little seen in the Debate I never thought more necessary for a Gentleman, than to understand and practise the Fundamentals of Religion, without being troubled with the Niceties of this or that Form of Church Government, which is only proper to these who live by it. Besides, these Three or Four Weeks past, there has been so much preached, spoke, and written on this Subject, that there is scarce place left for a New Thought. Wherefore I shall only offer a few general Remarks on the State of the Question, and the way and manner it is managed.

First, I cannot but with Regret take notice, that Protestant Ministers, who differ nothing in Essentials, should, by their Heats and Animosities, so much weaken the common Cause, and thereby endanger us to become an easy Prey to our Implacable Enemies, to whom, no doubt, this Paper War affords good Pastime.

Secondly, I find more Calmness of Temper in the Writings on the Episcopal Side, which would almost perswade an Unbyassed Looker on to think their Cause just, whereas the Writings of their Antagonists are so full of Spite, Malice, Envy, Strife, and bitter Railing, that one is apt to think they are acted by another Spirit than that of the Gospel, which breaths nothing, but Meekness, Love, and Charity.

Thirdly, If I have a true Notion of this so much talked of Toleration, it is only to give Episcopal Ministers a Liberty to preach in Meeting-Houses,

ses, and to be made capable of a Call to Vacant Churches by the greater part of the Heretors and Elders.

The first part, I suppose will be yielded without great Struggle, for her Majesty has given it already: So that all the Dispute seems to be, that men of that perswasion should be admitted to Churches and Benefices, *hinc illæ Lacrimæ.*

4. These who accepted a Toleration from a Popish King, to Usher in Popery, and subvert our Constitution, cannot in Reason or Conscience find fault with a Protestant Queen for granting it to Protestant Ministers, but their great fear is, that they creep into their Churches, possess Stipends, and in process of time Undermine their Government. I would ask a civil Question or two at these zealous Gentlemen. First if all the Churches of *Scotland* have been ever fully planted since the Revolution? 2^{do}. Who gave the power to 40, or 50 Ministers to assume all the rest, and whether this new Model of Presbyterian parity was of Divine or Human Institutions? 3^{tio}. What makes them now so much doubt the Peoples Inclinations, seing their Government was founded on them, for they being so very acceptable to them, first when they scarce knew them, they need not fear they will part with them now that they are so well acquainted?

5. I have been often told by persons of Worth and Credit, that for several Years, after the Revolution, most of the Churches beyond *Tay*, continued very long Vacant, because there were not Presbyterian Ministers to supply them, and one would think it had been better to have continued their old Pastors, than leave them desolate like Flocks without a Shepherd, to be a prey to every Ravenous Beast.

6. Again it cannot be denied, but that men thrust from their Churches and Houses by the wild Mobb, and deprived of their just Rights and Livings without any legal Sentence, were more hardly dealt with, and had more reason to complain, than the Presbyterians have, for Episcopal Ministers being allowed to be called to some Churches where the Heretors and Elders are of that perswasion, seing they are only to exercise Parochial Discipline therein, (which is essential to the Ministry) and no ways to be Sharers of their Jurisdiction, or intrude themselves into any of their Judicatories.

7. It is most certain, that there are a great many of all Ranks and Degrees of the Episcopal perswasion, and is it not just, that their Inclinations should be gratified, as well as theirs who affect Presbytry? It will take off all occasion of Murmuring against Church or State, and firmly engage them cordially to embrace that Government, where they find
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themselves so easy both in their Religious and civil concerns.

8. If Episcopal Ministers (who at the Revolution, were as Numerous, and had as good a legal Right to their Churches, as Presbyterians have now) had made so much Noise and Bustle as others do at present, I am afraid most part of them had been kept in possession to this day: But their peaceable behaviour at that time, and ever since, and the deference they have for the Supream Magistrate, and their aversion to disturb civil Societies, upon any pretext, ought in my opinion, strongly to recommend them to the Parliaments care and protection.

9. I shall only add this one remark more, which is that the Presbyterians value themselves on every occasions, for their great Sufferings, which they attribute to the Episcopal Clergy; I think truly no Man ought to be Persecute for his opinion, but if Sir George Mackenzie may be believed, he makes it pretty evident, that these who Suffered in the Reigns of the two Brothers were Condemned and Execute, as Rebels and Traitors, and that the Clergy had no hand in it.

In the last place, I see no reason why an Episcopal and Presbyterian Minister may not, by the good order of the civil Government, be brought to agree as well as *Lutherians* and *Calvinists* do in *Germany*, *Sweden*, and other places. Its a shame for us to need to go so far off for Lessons of good nature, and peaceable behaviour.

To conclude what has been said in the forgoing Sheets, Tho private Men may give their thoughts on publick occurrences, yet all they can say or write will be to little purpose, if the high Court of Parliament do not at this time Interpose with all its Vigor, for the Common welfare.

The Eyes of your Constituents, the eyes our Neighbouring Nation, nay, I may say, *Europe* too are upon you. Its from your united Courage and Wisdom that we expect to have our Religion, Liberties, and Trade settled on a sure and lasting foundation, to have the Honour of our Nation retrieved abroad, and our selves and Posterity made safe and happy at home.

I would not have entered so deeply into the state of things, if the Subject did not oblige me to it, and that I am tully satisfied, that the Service of my Queen and Countrey requires that at this Season (which is *now or never*) truth should be modestly but plainly spoke.

F I N I S.



